5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

Though Monckton reports (1921) a few large villages in the early post-contact period, it is only recently, in response to Australian pressure, that multi-clan villages, with populations ranging from 100 to 500, have become common. Most of the plantations found in the Northern district have been established by Australian ex-servicemen supported by government loans. A number of Orokaiva have been drawn to work on these plantations, others to jobs in Popondetta, others again to service with the police, the armed forces or employers outside the district. Such migration has substantially reduced the proportion of the male village population group.[2]

2. *Technology and Aesthetics*

We possess only the briefest description of Orokaiva industry (in Williams 1930). Although I did collect additional data, the traditional technology has been transformed to such an extent that my data must needs be fragmentary. The only axes and adzes now in use are made of steel; most of the various stone-made cutting tools described by Williams are no longer in use, being replaced by the ubiquitous bush knife wielded by young and old, male and female. One exception is worth noting, if only to emphasise an element of continuity: cockle shells are still used for the scraping of coconuts and for the shaping and decorating of pots. Most of the needles used by women are still made of flying fox bones (*poma*), even though a few needles have at times been obtained from the Mission. While files for sharpening tools are necessarily made of steel, rough leaves still serve as tools for scraping pots, smoothing down wood, etc. The same mixture in the use of basic tools is found in agriculture, hunting, and fishing: we still find the digging stick but also the axe; traditional hand nets and fishing spears (with steel tips), but also snorkels. For hunting, traditional devices have been almost entirely replaced by the shot gun. The old technology is still basically intact in those few industries which are directly related to ceremonial life: the making and decorating of loin cloths, feather headdresses, ceremonial weaponry, musical instruments such as drums. Certain other specifically feminine artifacts (mats, baskets, string bags) are still produced and in use, while much of the contemporary Orokaiva house-building technology is traditional, Fine wickerwork for ceremonial objects (armlets, spear decorations, etc.) is still made by some of the older men. Orokaiva women have almost stopped making pots, though this was an important industry in pre-contact times. While trade goods are used for everyday purposes, such pots as are still made serve as gifts to women at the time of marriage. They are kept for sentimental reasons, but we were able to see only very few.

An everyday Orokaiva meal consists of taro, often with a few vegetable condiments: coconut milk, cordyline tips, or edible pitpit,[3] or one of a number of herbs, sometimes of supposed medicinal value. Much care is devoted to the cooking of the taro and variety is provided partly by a choice from many varieties of taro growing in most gardens. In the dry season, any of a number of subsidiary foods (sweet potato, German taro, yam, banana, breadfruit and several others) may be added to make the taro stretch further. Meat or fish is eaten only rarely, usually on festive occasions. Foods like tea, sugar, bread and salt are also reserved for such occasions. Although several traditional methods of

making salt were described to me, the housewife depends mainly on trade salt. Meals never consist of more than one course. Plates, forks and spoons are owned by all households but people do not always use them. While boiling is the most common way of preparing food, bananas, yams and breadfruit are usually roasted. Meat is often preserved by daily smoking, sometimes for long periods. There is a rule against eating meat 'in lent' and this is kept very strictly, but probably for traditional religious reasons to be discussed later. The main drink with meals is a soup consisting of the water in which the vegetables and herbs were cooked.

Foraging. A good deal of plant and animal food is obtained from foraging, especially in the tropical rain forest which covers most of the Northern District. Among foraged animal foods I would mention especially grubs, frogs, snails, rats, bush eggs and lice. Foraged plant foods are especially valued during the dry season when roots, leaves and fern fronds may make up part of a meal. Savoury herbs and leaves, however, are collected at all times of the year. Some food plants, though growing in the forest, are owned by individuals so that the gathering of these plants may be better described as harvesting than collecting. The most important are the *tauga* and *puga* nut, sago, breadfruit, wild fig, and fruiting pandanus.[4]

Hunting. According to Waddell and Krinks, about two man-hours weekly are spent on hunting (3.7 hours by men and 0.3 hours by women). Hunting patterns on the Mount Lamington foothills differ widely from those on the alluvial plains where kunai grass is widespread. On the foothills, there is hunting in reverted gardens and in very limited areas of virgin bush. The usual quarry consists of small marsupials and birds. If a pig is encountered, it is invariably a village pig whose owner has a claim to the carcase. The game population was virtually exterminated after the introduction of guns in the 1950s. In the kunai country, on the other hand, hunting land is abundant. The technique is by firing the kunai so that the animals can be shot when they escape. Such a hunt requires a large number of men who ring the burnt-over area. Not only marsupials but also pigs are killed, either by gunfire or by being roasted alive in the kunai grass. By no means all animals killed in the fire are retrieved. Fires tend to get out of hand and to spread over surrounding bush land which then is often covered with kunai grass and so is useless for purposes of cultivation.

Fishing. The supply of fish has suffered greatly with the introduction of snorkels after the Second World War, as this equipment enabled the Orokaiva to fish out their rivers almost completely in a very short time. Fish is still an important resource, however, in the lower reaches of the huge rivers which run through the Northern District: Kumusi, Ambogo, Girua, Sambogo, etc. In Inonda, the village studied by Crocombe and Hogbin (1963) and Waddell and Krinks (1968), 3.8 man hours per week are spent on fishing, mostly with spears, and the product is used not only for consumption but also for trade. (Inonda people also trade meat and bush eggs.) Many of the villages near the mountain, such as Sivepe, have very little fish. Apart from a few eels and crabs, the rivers contained a small supply of two-inch-long fishes caught in April with a small hand-net used as a scoop. (See Williams 1930:53 for description.)

Animal Husbandry. There are three kinds of domestic livestock: pigs, dogs and fowls. Every man still has one or more small dog which he uses for hunting

353 *tapa* cloths, also worn on ceremonial occa-
[415] sions; often nowadays mother's best dress and father's best shorts and shirt are also kept in this box. Everyday tools—fishing spears, pig spear, bush knife, and axe—are stored between the floor joists under the floor platform. A
[372] bundle of dry firewood may be stored under the house in case of a prolonged spell of wet
[227] weather. The dwelling of each clan fishing-leader is easily recognized by the large seine net hung to dry under the eaves or rolled in a corner of the verandah.

342 The Yega build one other form of dwelling, a garden shelter (*dobo*) usually roughly constructed with leaf walls, frequently open at one end and often so low from floor to roof that a person cannot stand erect in it. A *dobo* is a temporary dwelling, built near the swidden in current use, and used by a man and his family for up to a week at a time while they are working in their gardens, which may be three or four miles from the village. The *dobo* is also used to shelter from rain or to take a siesta during shorter, one-day visits to the garden.

343 A *gaga* is simply a talking platform where
[461] men sit for a chat, a chew (of betelnut) or a
[614] smoke during siesta time, or after the day's
[621] work is done. There is usually at least one
[584] *gaga* for each clan in a village. The *gaga* performs an important social function for it is here that quarrels are settled, marriages arranged, and the everyday problems and business of the village discussed and finalised.

291 Everyday clothing is a pair of shorts and maybe a shirt or a singlet for boys and men, and a cotton dress or skirt for girls and women.
[287] The traditional body covering for both men and women was beaten out bark-cloth of the
[171] paper mulberry tree. This is used throughout the Pacific and is known as *tapa*. *Tapa* skirts and loin cloths are still worn on special occasions, such as weddings and New Year sing-sings, while many older people wear *tapa* to
323 church on Sundays. The Yega and their neigh-
[289] bours are expert tapa-makers but they did not have either the suitable clay or the art of pot-
439 making. They used to trade their *tapa* for pots
[178] from Ambasi, thirty miles to the north, and from Wanigela, 100 miles to the south. This trade has now declined because everybody can

[P11-A] [TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 12-A]

Section 2: Economic Assistance

177 Subsistence: Undoubtedly, European contact had a profound influence
433 on the subsistence economy, both through the introduction of steel tools and of the pax Australiana. The government did not, however, intervene directly in the operation of the Orokaiva subsistence economy; it was a very simple economy, but it provided, in general, adequate nutrition and housing. The first time the Orokaiva subsistence
731 economy broke down seriously in the post-contact period was immediately
657 after the eruption of Mount Lamington. The government therefore decided to offer some limited assistance towards the re-establishment of the subsistence economy in the resettlement villages built when the refugees left the evacuation camps. One requirement of the new villages was a food supply until new gardens had been made and harvested. This
[241] requirement was met by the planting of a quick-growing variety of sweet potato in villages in the vicinity of Ilimo camp. The government also bought up any root crops the Orokaiva could supply and distributed these in the resettlement villages throughout 1951, as needed.

The opportunity offered by the evacuation camps was also taken
731 to introduce a few innovations which, it was thought, would improve
242 subsistence gardening in the resettlement villages. People were taught the cultivation of the variety of sweet potatoes mentioned above, as well as of corn, tomatoes and beans. Seeds and plants were supplied. An agricultural officer demonstrated on a large scale the growing of
[412] sweet potatoes and peanuts. In order to facilitate the rapid establishment of gardens--which the government hoped would be bigger and better than the pre-eruption ones--small spades were distributed to villages. These small spades were not a familiar implement to the Orokaiva, but the agricultural officers thought they would be more efficient than the wooden implements and large shovels hitherto used in villages. These small spades cannot have taken on very well; I saw none in Sivepa or Inonda. I myself had brought a spade for the garden I established in Sivepa, but my neighbour, upon seeing it, at once supplied me with a grubber (ex-American army stock). A very brief acquaintance with the root structure of the garden weeds convinced me that a spade was indeed
● [227] of limited utility. Finally, in order to add to the supply of protein in the resettlement villages, the camp superintendent distributed some snorkels for catching fish.

Keesing reports there were fears in the camp that the eruption
731 would have destroyed taro seed stock, but this fear proved unfounded.
134 The taro plants remained perfectly healthy and the volcanic ash made the soil amazingly fertile for awhile, so that food shortages were quickly relieved.

Issue of Food: In the camps, rice, tinned meat, tobacco were distributed
731 according to a ration scheme based on the census figures. Each village
657 constable was issued with rations for the number of people resident in the villages under his control. These distributions were continued in